

# Bullying Prevention

Educating and Empowering  
School Communities



# Bullying Prevention: Educating and Empowering School Communities

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## Progressive Discipline

Progressive Discipline is a whole school approach that utilizes a continuum of interventions, supports and consequences that include opportunities for reinforcing positive behaviour while helping students make good choices that shifts the focus from one that is solely punitive to one that is corrective and supportive. Progressive Discipline respects the belief that educators must balance firm and fair practice in order to reach students and honour the goal of meeting students at their need. Progressive Discipline provides educators with options to reinforce positive behaviour balanced with maintaining a safe school environment.

## Bullying Prevention

Bullying Prevention in the Durham District School Board is developed based on: Ministry directives; established research; Durham Directions; Character Education; Restorative Practice, Progressive Discipline and Safe Schools Goals. Based on the combined information and goals of these initiatives, Bullying Prevention includes:

- a clear **definition of bullying**
- an **explicit statement that bullying is not tolerated**
- an understanding of the importance of bullying prevention in creating a safe learning environment which directly **affects student achievement**
- **an integrated approach to bullying prevention**
- explicit lessons with inspirational resources that teach **safe responses to bullying**
- explicit lessons with inspirational resources that redirect student behaviour to be **kind and inclusive**
- opportunities for students to **role play** solutions to bullying, that include being kind and inclusive
- **Progressive Discipline** as a consequence for bullying
- **Restorative Practice** as a strategy for reintegrating students who bully, when they are ready
- **support** for the victim, the bully, the bystanders and other students
- **classroom support** that addresses specific bullying incidents
- connection to the school culture and established initiatives that promote a **Positive School Climate**
- practices that foster **Character Education**



***“The most effective way of reducing bullying in schools is to involve the entire school – teachers, administrators, the children, and peer groups – to teach children and adolescents how to change attitudes and behaviours in order to stop bullying.”***

Centre for Knowledge on Healthy Child Development, McMaster University

## **The Ontario Ministry of Education Definition of Bullying**

The Ontario Ministry of Education has provided the following definition of bullying:

*Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.*

Students may attain or maintain power over others in the school through real or perceived differences. Some areas of difference may be size, strength, age, intelligence, economic status, social status, solidarity of peer group, religion, ethnicity, disability, need for special education, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, and race.

Bullying is a dynamic of unhealthy interaction that can take many forms. It can be physical (e.g., hitting, pushing, tripping), verbal (e.g., name calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist, or homophobic comments), or social (e.g., excluding others from a group, spreading gossip or rumours). It may also occur through the use of technology (e.g., spreading rumours, images, or hurtful comments through the use of e-mail, cellphones, text messaging, Internet websites, or other technology).

Children who suffer prolonged victimization through bullying, as well as children who use power and aggression as bullies, may experience a range of psycho-social problems that may extend into adolescence and adulthood.

*(Source: Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, Legislation Section)*

## Forms That Bullying Might Take

### Physical:

- pushing, tripping, hitting
- taking or breaking someone's belongings on purpose

### Verbal:"

- calling someone names, teasing, or making fun of them
- insulting, humiliating, or threatening someone

### Social:

- leaving someone out of "the group" or refusing to play with them, isolation
- making negative comments about someone, insults
- intentional embarrassment
- exclusion
- showing pictures or other things that are rude or insulting

### Electronic / Cyberbullying:

- using the Internet or a cell phone to e-mail or send text messages or pictures in order to threaten someone, hurt their feelings, embarrass them or make them look bad, or spread rumours or tell secrets about them

*( Adapted from Ontario Ministry of Education, School Climate Survey)*

## Types and Examples of Bullying

### Racial/ethnocultural:

- treating someone inappropriately because of their race, culture, or skin colour
- making negative comments about someone's race, culture, or skin colour
- telling racist jokes

### Sexual:

- making sexual comments or jokes about someone's body
- touching, pinching, or grabbing part of someone's body in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable

### Gender Role-based:

- treating someone badly due to gender differences
- exclusion due to gender - for example, telling a girl she cannot play a sport because she is a girl
- making hurtful comments about someone's personal interests, hobbies, style, preference, activities - for example, calling a boy a "sissy" because he likes a hobby you think only girls should like

### Homophobic:

- calling someone "gay" or "lesbian" in a way meant to upset them
- calling someone "gay" or "lesbian" because of their choice of activities, hobbies, interests or clothing
- making fun of someone who has parents who are lesbian or gay

### Religion-based:

- treating someone negatively because of their religion
- making negative comments about someone's religion

### Disability-based:

- treating someone negatively because of a disability they have - for example, making jokes about a person who uses a wheelchair (visible disability) or calling a person names because he or she learns in a different way than you do (invisible disability) - or spreading rumours about someone because of a disability you think that person may have
- exclusion due to a disability they have (visible or invisible) or a disability you think they may have

### Income-based:

- treating someone negatively because of the type of housing or the neighbourhood they live in
- making negative comments about someone's actual or perceived economic status / family income because they do not appear to have a lot of money (e.g., because they may not have name-brand clothing, or because of where they live)

*(Adapted from Ontario Ministry of Education, School Climate Survey)*

# **Prevention and Intervention: Partnering with Parents**

## Shared Goals:

**Working together, educators and parents strive to meet the needs of students as they pursue their learning goals. When bullying occurs, this partnership is crucial.** Open communication between home and school provides students with collaborative support and strategies to work through the incident and find solutions for the future.

This section will provide information for parents of students who are bullied; parents of students who bully; and parents of students who witness bullying. All parents are encouraged to openly discuss bullying with their children. All students are affected by bullying. As a witness, bystander, or schoolmate of students who are bullied and students who bully, all school community members need to be knowledgeable about bullying. As well, all stakeholders need to be concerned about bullying for the following reasons:

- It affects student learning – for those students who are both directly and indirectly involved in a bullying incident
- It creates anxiety, fear, frustration & distraction for all involved
- It can result in depression
- It adversely affects the culture and safety of schools and communities

Parents can help by explicitly supporting educators and using a common language when discussing bullying with their children. Key messages about bullying from the Safe Schools Department include:

- Bullying is not tolerated at school
- We don't laugh at someone else's pain
- Being mean is not appropriate
- Being kind is appropriate

Bullying is behaviour that is contrary to the school code of conduct; contrary to the Durham District School Board code of conduct; and contrary to the goals of the Ontario Ministry of Education. When a student's safety, physical or emotional, is compromised, the school climate is also compromised. This is not acceptable in Durham schools.

### **Bullying: We Can All Help Stop It**

The Ontario Ministry of Education has created a guide for parents that is enclosed in this document and available at [www.ontario.ca/safeschools](http://www.ontario.ca/safeschools) and is included in Appendix F.

Included in this guide is the Ministry definition of bullying; types of bullying; what parents can do about bullying; and responses to bullying to teach children. Parents are encouraged to read through the guide with their children and commence a dialogue about the issue.

Additional information that parents may find helpful is included in this section. The following information is adapted from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, *Raising Resilient Children and Youth, 2009*



## Resilient Children and Youth:

Durham Directions outlines the board's plan for student and school success. The motto of this plan is, *"Success in learning to meet the challenges of the future."*

The challenges of the future may hold difficult situations for our students. Durham educators, along with parents, aim to teach students resiliency in order to prepare them for unpredictable and stressful difficulties or change. Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from setbacks.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health outlines three key components that affect the resiliency of children and youth:

### 1. Individual Factors:

- Temperament
- Learning strengths
- Feelings and emotions
- Self concept
- Ways of thinking
- Adaptive skills
- Social skills

### 2. Family Factors

- Attachment
- Communication
- Family structure
- Parent relations
- Parenting style
- Sibling relations
- Parents' health
- Support outside the family

### 3. Environmental Factors

- Inclusion: Having a sense of belonging
- Social conditions
- Youth involvement

In response to a bullying incident, parents and educators are challenged to consider these factors in order to provide effective support and strategies for the children who are directly involved in the incident.

Are there areas for growth in self concept; adaptive skills or social skills? Are there family factors that are affecting the child's behaviour? Does the child feel safe and included both at home and at school? Working through the three factors provides parents and educators with a starting point for providing the necessary and specific interventions to help students who bully change their behavior; to help students who are bullied to strengthen their resilience; and to help students who witness bullying to find the courage to report bullying to an adult.

## Identifying Bullying Behaviour:

Social relationships, child development and learning with peers present a complex dynamic for children. Combined with the three factors that influence resilience, the context for bullying at school is multi-layered and challenging for parents and for educators.

The researchers from PREVnet have identified specific behaviours that will help parents and educators recognize the signs of bullying for children who are victimized and children who bully. The following lists are not meant to alarm parents, but are meant as a guide for determining whether your child is in need of support.

(Adapted from the PREVnet website,  
<http://www.prevnet.ca/Bullying/SignsofBullying/tabid/119/Default.aspx> )

## Signs of Victimization:

Children and youth who are being victimized often show a change in behaviour and/or emotions:

- Not wanting to go to school or participate in extra-curricular activities
- Anxious, fearful, over-reactive
- Exhibits low self-esteem and makes negative comments about him/herself
- Headaches and stomach aches
- Lower interest and performance in school
- Loses things, needs money, reports being hungry after school
- Injuries, bruising, damaged clothing, broken things
- Unhappy, irritable, little interest in activities
- Trouble sleeping, nightmares, bedwetting
- Expresses threats to hurt himself/herself or others

Children seldom clearly articulate that they are being bullied. Often parents are required to observe changes in their child's behaviour and ask questions. Providing children with an opportunity to open up within a safe, caring relationship increases the chance that he/she will report bullying.

Children and youth who are victimized often lack relationships in which they can experience positive identity, power, and independence:

- Adults in the family may be overprotective, restrictive
- Siblings may bully child at home
- Child is lonely and isolated at school
- Child has few friends at school or in neighbourhood
- Teachers may be unaware of child's strengths and challenges and therefore unresponsive to needs
- Few opportunities to shine and show talents at home, school, or in the community (positive power)

## Signs of Bullying Others:

Children and youth who bully may show behaviours or emotional signs that they are using power aggressively:

- Little concern for others' feelings
- Does not recognize impact of his/her behaviour on others
- Aggressive with siblings, parents, teachers, friends, and animals
- Bossy and manipulative to get own way
- Possessing unexplained objects and/or extra money
- Secretive about possessions, activities, and whereabouts
- Holds a positive attitude towards aggression
- Easily frustrated and quick to anger

Children who bully others often experience power and aggression in their own relationships or in those close to them:

- Adults in the family may model use of power and aggression by yelling, hitting, rejecting child
- Adults in the family may model use of power and aggression with each other
- Siblings may bully child at home
- Child has friends who bully and are aggressive
- Child has trouble standing up to peer pressure
- Few opportunities to shine and show talents at home, school, or in the community (positive power)

Children who bully need to understand that their behaviour is unacceptable. Honest discussion, consequences and support can help children who bully recognize the need to change their behaviour. Sometimes children will need added support if they are dealing with more complex issues. Parents and school staff can work together to support students in: identifying unacceptable behaviour; determining underlying causes; utilizing effective strategies; and making positive choices.

## Contacting the School:

If a child does report a bullying incident to parents, it is important to document the details of the incident. When contacting the school, parents may relay detailed information to the school principal which will make the investigation proceed more rapidly.

Parents can expect several conversations with a school administrator as the investigation ensues. Administrators will also need to speak to the students involved.

The aim of the investigation is to determine:

- What happened?
- How long has it been going on and where does it take place?
- Who is involved?
- Did anyone else witness it?
- How has it affected the victim?

- How will the victim be supported and safe?
- How will the bully be consequence and supported to change?
- How will the bully repair the harm that was done?
- How will all students affected learn how to respond effectively to bullying?
- How will parents and educators support all students in this process?

Parents of both the bully and the victim will be contacted with information regarding the incident and consequences.

*"When you punish a child, it's efficient, it's fast and it's what we learned. But discipline is not something we do to somebody. It's a process. It's an engagement with a child that in the end helps them become the best they can become. It takes more time. It is not efficient. It isn't fast. But it does leave both our dignity intact in the long run."*

*(Barbara Coloroso, Toronto Star, July 24, 2010)*

Parents can expect administrators to follow Progressive Discipline guidelines in order to determine consequences for bullying.

Writer and mom, Julie Watson Smith has written about her family's experience with bullying in the article, *"Putting a STOP to Bullying – What Parents Can Do to Put a Stop to Bullying*, [www.momeomagazine.com](http://www.momeomagazine.com), January 18, 2011. She has the following advice for parents:

1. Keep your feelings in check
2. Provide a safe space for your child to express his or her feelings
3. Talk it out
4. Continue to support your child in other ways
5. Report the bullying

For more detail on each of these points, please see Appendix F for the entire article.

## **Restorative Practice**

There is an understanding that good relationships are the basis for learning. Anything that affects relationships, such as bullying, impacts on learning. Challenging inappropriate behaviour needs to be experienced as an opportunity for learning.

Restorative Practice is a way of thinking and being that involves staff and students working with each other in a manner that is both firm (consistent, explicit, with high standards) and fair (validates student voice, provides explanations and sets clear expectations).

**It is not recommended that the bully and the victim meet together immediately after a bullying incident.**

After a bullying incident is reported, and a thorough investigation has occurred, and students have had time to reflect, a Restorative Conference may be considered. A Restorative Conference involving the student who was bullied and student who bullied is only appropriate when:

- The student who bullied takes responsibility for his/her behaviour
- The student who bullied admits his/her behaviour was wrong and hurtful
- The student who bullied has agreed to stop the harmful behaviour and change

- The student who bullied understands that bullying will not be tolerated
- The student who bullied is willing to accept help to change his/her behaviour
- The student who bullied and the student who was bullied are willing to participate
- A trained Restorative Practice Facilitator is available to prepare for and facilitate the conference

Due to the on-going and persistent nature of bullying and due to the power imbalance between the bully and the victim, often a Restorative Conference is not appropriate. In many cases, both the victim and the bully need time to reflect, gather support and feel ready to move forward.

In some cases, and with time, both parties may be ready and open to restoring the relationship and working to make things right. In such cases, a Restorative Classroom Circle after a bullying incident may be appropriate. The goals of a Restorative Classroom Circle after a bullying incident are to:

- help all students involved, both directly and indirectly, to process what happened and how students are affected by bullying
- give staff another opportunity to explicitly state that bullying is not acceptable; and teach how to respond to bullying
- give the student who was bullied and the student who bullied an opportunity to show the class that the incident has been dealt with and is finished
- allow all students involved to move forward, and refocus on learning in a respectful environment, in which everyone's dignity remains intact
- restate behaviour expectations and clarify for all students

Often students are not ready for this process until they have experienced support and in the bully's case, consequences that promote reflection and change. However, when both the victim and the bully feel supported and ready to move on, a Restorative Classroom Circle can be instrumental in providing all students with a voice in expressing how they feel about bullying in their class and determining what action they will commit to in order to prevent it from happening again. An educator leading this Circle should be trained in Restorative Practice Circle Training.

### **The Restorative Questions are:**

#### **When things go wrong....**

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who was affected and how?
5. What do you think you need to do to make things right?

#### **When someone has been harmed ...**

1. What did you think when you realized what had happened?
2. What impact has this incident had on you and others?
3. What has been the hardest thing for you?
4. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

## The Restorative Questions are in direct alignment with the Behaviour Expectations:

Finding Common Ground (modified by DDSB)	Behaviour Expectations	Restorative Questions 1	Impact on Bully	Restorative Questions	Impact on Victim
Think critically	We respect each other	What happened? What were you thinking at the time?	Take ownership of the poor choices	What did you think when you realized what had happened?	Reflect on what happened
See clearly	We see each other	What have you thought about since?	Consider why it was wrong	What has been the hardest thing for you?	Share difficulty dealing with the harm
Care deeply	We can about each other	Who was affected and how?	Understand the impact of their behaviour on others	What impact has this incident had on you and others?	Voice feelings
Act wisely	We support each other	What do you think you need to do to make things right?	Repair the harm that was done	What do you think needs to happen to make things right?	Voice needs Voice in restoration

This alignment allows educators to include good teaching practice and character development in their disciplinary practice. When students make poor choices, Progressive Discipline provides a guideline for determining consequences. Providing the student with an opportunity to reflect, with guidance, on the poor choice / behaviour through Restorative Practice, helps the student:

- Take ownership of the poor choice
- Consider why it was wrong
- Understand the impact of their behaviour on others
- Repair the harm that was done

### **Restorative Practice is a way of maintaining a safe school and a positive school climate.**

Students are challenged to think about their behaviour and offer a way to repair the harm that has been done. The aim of a restorative approach in school communities is to strengthen relationships, manage conflict and tensions and repair harm as a way of building community.

**Parents are encouraged to use Restorative Practice at home.** At meal time, a natural family circle occurs where family members can take turns discussing events from their day and share stories from their experiences. The Restorative Questions can be posted on the kitchen fridge and family members can use the questions to process poor choices and find solutions through open communication.

**Taking a restorative approach at home reinforces what is going on at school and provides a common language for educators, parents and students.** It also sends a clear message to children that poor choices will be dealt with in a respectful manner and that an attempt to repair the harm is expected.

### **Reporting and Responding to Bullying:**

Parents are encouraged to share the following reporting tips with their child, as well as the Kids Help Phone line and the 4 R's of Bullying Prevention. Providing your child with options for both reporting and responding to bullying empowers them to find their own voice and assert themselves.

### **Reporting Tips for Students:**

- Report to a trusting adult: teacher, principal, vice-principal, parent, lunch room supervisor, bus driver, coach, family member
- Ask a friend to go with you if you are hesitant
- Explain what has been going on with as much detail as you can: what happened, where, who was involved, and how long it has been going on, who witnessed the incident(s), and was any of your property taken or destroyed
- Write down as much as you can
- If you are not comfortable speaking to an adult, use an anonymous reporting method like **Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868**
- **Stand Up. Tell Someone. Ask for help.**

### **Kids Help Phone:**

Kids Help Phone is Canada's only toll-free, 24-hour, bilingual and anonymous phone counselling, referral and Internet service for children and youth. Professional counselors provide immediate, caring support to youth across the country.

Every day, the service is used because it is completely anonymous and confidential. Young people can access the service by phone or through the Internet and they don't even have to give their name.

The only time the counselor will intervene is if they do have contact information, and they feel someone's well being is in imminent danger.

The phone number and web address are visible in schools across the Durham Region.

1-800-668-6868 [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

### **211 is here to help:**

211 is a three-digit phone number and website that provides information and referral to community and social services in Ontario. Certified Information and Referral Specialists are caring, understanding and knowledgeable, and pride themselves on their ability to connect you and your loved ones with the services you need. **When you don't know where to turn, call 211**

With information on more than 56,000 agencies and services, they can help you find the answers you need, quickly and easily. The phone service is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year, and is available in more than 150 languages. **Find the information you need at [www.211.ontario.ca](http://www.211.ontario.ca)**

If you need help finding the services that are right for you, visit [www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca) for a directory of more than 56,000 agencies and services in Ontario. Our easy-to-use website is fully searchable, updated frequently and is available in both English and French versions.

### **Prevention for all students:**

All students can make a difference at their school by taking a stand against bullying whenever they see or hear it occurring.

### **The 4 R's of Bullying Prevention:**

Parents are encouraged to share the following bullying prevention strategy with their children to reinforce what they are learning at school. Our main goal is to maintain the safety of all students. For their own safety, students are discouraged from confronting the student who is bullying; rather we strongly urge witnesses to take the student who is victimized with them and report the incident to an adult.

## **The 4 R's of Bullying Prevention**

### **Recognize**

- Know what bullying looks like, sounds like and feels like
- Understand the difference between bullying and conflict

### **Refuse**

- If you don't like what you see happening, invite the victim to walk away with you
- Choose an upstander action

### **Report**

- Report facts to a trusting adult
- Know the difference between "tattling" and reporting

### **Restore**

- Choose to make positive choices
- Be a part of the solution
- Choose to be an upstander



## Bystander to Upstander

Those who witness acts of bullying have a unique position of power and influence. Their presence, cheering and laughter empowers those who bully and adds to the shame and humiliation of those who are victims.

Even though the bully may have an audience, many in that audience do not agree with the act that is transpiring. They may not have the skills, knowledge or confidence to intervene either directly in the situation or indirectly by informing an adult.

Bystanders stay back; struggle with their own inaction; and feel guilty after a bullying incident is witnessed. Upstanders stand up to bullies; they feel confident in their own actions; and they feel a sense of accomplishment when bullying behaviour stops and students learn to get along with each other.

## Upstander Actions

Some suggestions on how to become an **upstander** include:

1. Treat all schoolmates with respect.
2. Stand up for students who are bullied.
3. If you don't like what is happening, invite the victim to walk away with you and report to an adult.
4. If it is difficult for you to speak up about bullying on your own, ask someone to do it with you.
5. Invite students who you know get bullied to play or interact with you somewhere else.
6. Comfort students who are bullied. Tell them they don't deserve to be treated that way.
7. Bullies need help. Be open to letting them make positive changes.
8. Be aware. If you see bullying, do something about it. Bullying can stop if we all get involved.

## The 4 R's of Bullying Prevention for Elementary Students

Strategy	Hand Action	Notes
Recognize (see)	Hands on either side of your eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know what bullying looks like, sounds like and feels like</li> <li>• Understand the difference between bullying and conflict</li> </ul>
Refuse	One hand up like a stop sign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you don't like what you see happening, invite the victim to walk away with you</li> <li>• Choose an upstander action</li> </ul>
Report	Two hands motioning talking at each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report facts to a trusting adult</li> <li>• Know the difference between "tattling" and reporting</li> </ul>
Restore	Hands placed on top of each other over the heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose to make positive choices</li> <li>• Be a part of the solution</li> <li>• Choose to be an upstander</li> </ul>

# **Prevention and Intervention: Cyberbullying**

## Cyberbullying Overview for Students and Parents

### What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs through the use of information and communication technologies. All bullying, including cyberbullying, includes these four features:

- It is a deliberate act
- There is an intent to harm
- It is usually persistent over time
- There is an imbalance of power

### Cyberbullying Examples

Cyberbullying can take place using many forms of electronic communication including the Internet, computers, cell/smart phones and gaming systems. If emails, texts, posts, pictures and videos make you feel unsafe, hurt, and uneasy, then you may be a victim of Cyberbullying.

Potential examples include:

- Insults, belittling remarks, spiteful teasing and rude comments
- Videos, photos and podcasts of a negative or embarrassing nature
- Jokes at someone else's expense
- Systematically excluding, ignoring and isolating someone
- Threats

Cyberbullying may involve traditional bullying as well. For example, a bully may be making insulting remarks to you while at school and texting rude comments to your cell phone after school.

### What Makes Cyberbullying Different?

Cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in a number of ways:

- **No safe refuge:** Cyberbullying can occur 24/7, anywhere and extend well beyond classroom walls and schoolyards.
- **Can go "viral":** Harmful materials can quickly reach a large audience over email, the Internet and websites.
- **Perceived anonymity:** Cyberbullies can set up fake user names or use someone else's computer to try to hide their identity; they hide behind the perceived anonymity of the internet
- **Cyberbullies** do not fear being punished for their actions and believe they are outside the reach of schools and school boards
- **Evidence:** Text messages, emails and postings can be tracked and recorded.
- **Bystanders:** Bystanders can become perpetrators if they take part in online discussions or forward offending materials.

The impact of a single act of cyberbullying (e.g. posting an embarrassing video on YouTube) can

have far reaching and long lasting effects, which can be difficult to retract as information spreads over the Internet. Hence, the "**usually** persistent over time" feature of bullying can occur with a single act of cyberbullying.

### **Criminal Activity**

Some forms of cyberbullying may cross the line into criminal activity and may require police involvement. Contact your parents/guardian, school principal, vice-principal or teacher if you are unsure or suspect criminal activity.

# Cyberbullying Checklist for Parents - School Issues

## Definition

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place using any type of electronic communication. All bullying, including cyberbullying, includes these four features:

- It is a deliberate act
- There is an intent to harm
- It is usually persistent over time
- There is an imbalance of power

If you believe that your child is being cyberbullied, the following checklist may increase the speed and efficiency that the school can help with a solution.

STOP: Do not respond to any communications

BLOCK: Block the sender

TALK: Talk to your child to gather information and notify the police and/or school

SAVE: Save copies of all communications

**Bullies / Witnesses:** When talking to your child record the list of names of students who are either bullies or witnesses to the bullying.

**Bullies:**

**Witnesses:**

If Cyberbullying is present it is important to determine the method used which could include:

Webpage	Get copies of the webpage by printing or screen capture.
Chat session	Collect copies of chat session from printed chat logs if they exist. Make sure to collect from all involved.
Facebook	Have student log into Facebook and show the evidence. Either print or screen capture the evidence.
Youtube	Have student provide evidence of the video location on Youtube. Take a screenshot of the video and then download a copy to your harddrive.
Cellphone	Have student show the evidence on their phone. Depending upon the phone, have them email or text photos or messages, take pictures of their phone screen or have them print out a copy of text logs from the phone.
Other	Collect evidence as available.

At this point it is important to determine the scope of the distribution / availability of the offending material and the ability to contain the information.

Scope	Offending Material
<input type="checkbox"/> Minimal	Direct text messages, emails, private chat conversations, pictures between the bully and victim or limited witnesses
<input type="checkbox"/> Urgent	Any material either posted to the internet or widely distributed through text messages or email.

## 10 Things Parents Can Do to Address Cyberbullying

1. **Keep computers in a common area** so you can monitor activities.
2. **Set up email, chat accounts and blogs with your children** so you know the type of information they are posting online.
3. **Ask to see email and Instant Messaging contact lists** so you can verify who each person is and how your child knows them.
4. **Teach your child never to post or send things they wouldn't want everyone to see or read.** Discuss the importance of treating others with kindness and respect online.
5. **Learn about online activities.** You may be unfamiliar with social networking sites, websites, chat rooms and blogs. Many adults lack the knowledge and computer proficiency to accurately monitor and supervise online activities, but it is important to make an effort to learn in order to monitor effectively.
6. **Start talking about cyberbullying.** Children may be reluctant to come forward to tell you about their experiences, likely due to fears that their online activities will be restricted. Talk to your children about online safety and the importance of healthy relationships both on and offline.
7. **Investigate the issue thoroughly.** Has your child been involved in bullying behaviours as well? Sometimes hurtful messages have been sent by both parties involved.
8. **Problem solve with your child.** Brainstorm possible solutions to their cyberbullying problem with your child. Help them evaluate whether the various solutions will make the problem bigger or smaller.
9. **Be your child's advocate.** Once your child comes forward, it is your turn to take action. This may involve setting up new email and cell phone accounts. Save copies of harassing information and contact the appropriate authorities (police, school, service providers).
10. **Encourage your child to unplug.** Online communication among teens has become a central part of their social world. Despite the importance of this form of peer interaction, parents should encourage their teens to limit their time online and participate in offline relations as well.

## How do Parents know if their Child is Involved in Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a covert behaviour and is usually hidden from adults. Look for the following clues:

### Signs of being Cyberbullied

- Appears unhappy, irritable, particularly after using the computer
- Avoids discussions about their online activities
- Appears distressed when online
- Changes their pattern of computer usage
- May appear isolated from the peer group
- Low self-esteem and makes negative comments
- Complains of feeling unwell
- Lower interest in activities and performance
- Trouble sleeping, nightmares
- Threatens to hurt themselves or others

### Signs of Participating in Cyberbullied

- Secretive about online activities and switches screens or programs when others walk by
- Long hours spent online
- Becomes upset if he/she cannot use computer
- Using multiple online accounts, or an account that is not their own
- Avoids discussions about their online activities
- Appears agitated or aroused when online
- Aggressive with parents, siblings, pets, and friends; holds a positive view of aggression
- Low concern for others' feelings
- Has friends who bully and are aggressive
- Does not recognize impact of his/her behaviour

## Does Your Child Participate in Cyberbullying?

Sharing these tips with your child may help.

- Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Think about what it must feel like to be bullied online. Would you want to be treated that way?
- Resist peer pressure to participate in cyberbullying. Do what's right.
- Think before you click. Take a moment to decide if you want to be the kind of person who is hurtful rather than kind to others.
- Apologize to people you have hurt online.
- Hang out with friends who are positive and who will keep you in check.
- Remember, everyone is unique and different. No one likes to be teased in person or online.
- If you are having trouble getting along with others, talk to someone you trust like a parent or teacher. They can offer support and help you find positive ways to interact with peers.



## Cybersafety Student Tips

### **Be a Good Digital Citizen.**

Be polite and respectful to others online just as you would offline. If someone treats you rudely or meanly - do not respond. Online bullies are just like offline ones - they WANT you to answer (don't give them the satisfaction).

### **Secure your profile information by making sure that only friends can see it.**

Make sure your friends are people you really know and trust. If someone posts or does something to hurt you; **BLOCK THEM!**

### **Keep Passwords private.**

Never tell anyone your password except your parents or guardian.

### **Be careful with the photos you post online and who you share them with.**

Photos can be copied, altered, used and shared in ways you never intended. Photos posted online are sometimes hard if not impossible to retrieve.

### **Never send a message to others when you are angry.**

Wait until you have had time to calm down and think. Do your best to make sure that your messages are calmly and factually written. You will usually regret sending a "Flame" (angry) to someone else. Once you've sent a message, it is VERY hard to undo the damage that such "flames" can do.

### **You don't have to be "Always on." Turn off, disconnect, unplug.**

Give yourself a break. Don't stay online or connected too long. Spend time with your family and friends off line. Try a little less virtual reality and a lot more actual reality! Friends who talk fact to face get along better than those who just talk online.

## **What To Do If You Are Cyberbullied**

### **STOP**

It might be tempting to respond to the email or text, but it is better not to. Take a breath and count to ten.

### **BLOCK**

Block the sender from your phone, email or profile. If you don't know how to do this contact your service provider or a trusted adult.

### **RECORD**

Don't delete the message. Having a record of harassing messages can help you prove what happened.

## TALK

Do not keep this to yourself. You are NOT alone! Tell an adult you know and trust. Inform your local police if you are being threatened. Report the incident (s) to school administrators. Call KidsHelpPhone at 1-800-668-6868.

### **What kind of information should be saved?**

To report cyberbullying, it's really important to save as much info as you can. The more you have saved, the easier it will be to track down the people bothering you.

#### **Save the following from E-mail:**

- E-mail address
- Date and time received
- Copies of any relevant e-mails with full e-mail headers

#### **Save the following from groups or communities:**

- URL of offending MSN Group site
- Nickname of offending person
- E-mail address of offending person
- Date you saw it happen
- Screen shot of chat room

#### **Save the following from Profiles you see on the web:**

- URL of Profile
- Nickname of offending person
- E-mail address of offending person
- Date you viewed this Profile

#### **Save the following from Chat rooms:**

- Date and time of chat
- Name and URL of chat room you were in
- Nickname of offending person
- E-mail address of offending person
- Screenshot of chat room

## Glossary

**Blog:** An online journal of thoughts and ideas. Readily created and open to all to read, blogs, like diaries can contain information that is private or which can be hurtful, but unlike diaries are open to the world to read.

**Buddy List:** Internet messaging or chat rooms use “Buddy Lists” as one might use an address book. Buddy lists are lists of those users that may chat with an individual or send them information. Blocking a buddy or removing a buddy from a list prevents the individual from making contact with the user.

**Bullying:** Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance. (Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144)

**Bash Board:** A Bulletin Board where users purposely post hateful, private or other information meant to hurt others.

**Bulletin Board:** Also known as a Discussion Area, this service allows internet users to post comments about any subject. Other users may respond or reply and all discussions are available for all to see.

**Chat Room:** This is a digital space set aside on the internet in which users can communicate with each other either through text, audio or video. Some chat rooms are public and anyone can chat with anyone else and others are private and guests must be invited.

**Cookie:** Web sites save files on your computer as you visit them. These files are called “cookies”. They generally provide the website with information about you (name, login, password) so that the next time you visit, you will not be required to type it a second time. Cookies also can provide the website with information about the number of times you’ve visited their site and what parts of the site you’ve visited.

**Creeping:** In the digital world, this word equates to stalking. Anyone who tracks and follows another through their posts, discussions on online participation is said to be “creeping.”

**Facebook:** This social media site allows users to create a profile which may include photos, hobbies, interests, and to communicate with one another. Many students purposely do not set privacy settings to block strangers from viewing their personal information or blocking them.

**Flaming:** This describes an angry argument between users of a chat room or within an email. A user “flames” another when they send unkind and rude comments or swear at a person online.

**Friending:** The website Facebook calls its “buddy lists” Friends Lists. When a user wishes to give access to another user to see their personal profile and website, this is called “Friending.”

**Gaming:** Internet users who play online games are described as “gamers.” They enjoy “gaming.” Most online games provide users with an internet chat area and often audio chat while they play. As in other social media sites, these games allow users to create “buddy” lists of those who may play with them online.

**Happy Slapping:** This form of cyber-bullying involves physical force. An individual chooses a victim then as they slap, hit, push and assault the victim another records it digitally and posts it to a website for all to see.

**IP Address:** “Internet Protocol Address. Every computer has a unique address when connected to a network. This address is called the IP number.

**ISP:** “Internet Service Provider.” This is the company that provides internet service to users.

**MOODLE:** A Modular Object Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. This is an area of the internet set aside for student learning and intended as a digital extension of the classroom.

**MySpace:** This social networking site allows users to create profiles, websites, areas for blogging and posting information.

**Screen name:** This refers to a “Nickname” or alternate name that a user on the internet may use when posting in order to hide his or her identify.

**Social Networking Web Sites:** These are web sites which allow users to connect with one another under the circumstance of common hobbies, interests, common friends, business or games.

**Trolling:** This is the practice of purposely posting information onto a website about someone else which is private or which will create a conflict.

**Upstander:** Someone who chooses to do something about bullying for example, treating everyone with respect ; reporting to an adult; walking away with students who are targeted. (See Section Seven)

**Webcam:** A camera attached to a computer which broadcasts what it sees to the internet.

**4 R’s of Bullying Prevention:** Recognize / Refuse / Report / Restore (See Section Seven)